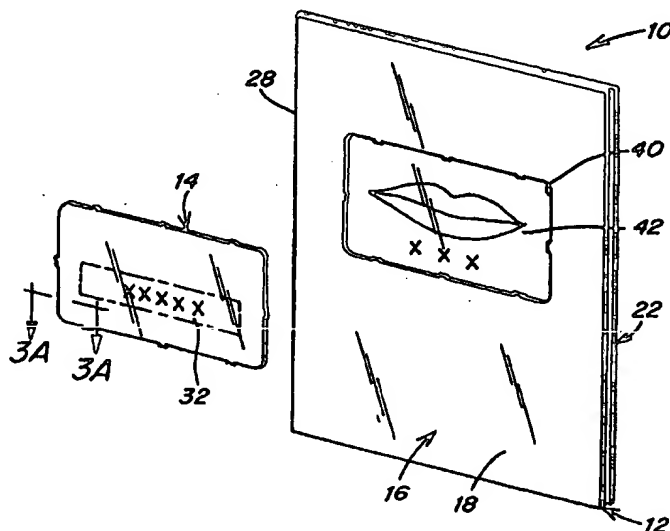




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(54) Title: COMBINATION CARRIER DOCUMENT AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS CARD



(57) Abstract

A combination includes a greeting card (12) having a front planar sheet (16) with a front outer surface (18) and an inner surface (20) and a rear planar sheet (22) with a rear outer surface (24) and an inner surface (26), with said front and rear planar sheets connected together along a fold line such that the inner surfaces of the front and rear planar sheets are superposed when the greeting card is in a closed configuration; a phone card (14); indicia on both the greeting card and the phone card which associates each with the other.

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COMBINATION CARRIER DOCUMENT AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS CARD

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTIONField of the Invention

The present invention relates to greeting cards, and more particularly, is directed to a combination greeting card and phone card in which the phone card, which includes indicia associated with a message contained in the greeting card, is removably attached to the greeting card. The present invention also relates to advertising and promotional materials, and more particularly is directed to a combination carrier document and phone card provided to a third party to establish good will and to reinforce a sending party's identity in the consciousness of a recipient.

Description of Related Art

Greeting cards are widely used during holidays (for example, Mother's Day, Christmas) special events (for example, birthday, graduation) and to send messages (for example, "get-well", "thank-you"). It is known to include various items with greeting cards. For example, Gold Circle Productions, Inc. of Miami, Florida markets a greeting card containing a compact disc of love songs. Other examples of items marketed with greeting cards are bookmarks (USP 5,359,793), removable message insert assemblies (USP 5,284,365), photographs (USP 5,269,084 and USP 4,890,402), confetti (USP 5,199,745), potpourri (USP 5,120,090), embroidery patches (USP 4,439,941), adhesive backed decals (USP 4,200,222), and toys (USP 4,152,865)

Further, the mounting and subsequent removal of items to and from a greeting card can take many forms, such as a release adhesive (USP 5,318,327), tabs (USP 5,284,365), tying or slits (USP 5,359,793), score lines (USP 5,269,084, USP 5,120,090 and USP 4,200,222), rupturable packages

(USP 5,199,745), pockets (USP 4,890,402) and openings (USP 4,152,865).

Each of the above greeting cards and removable items present a static arrangement. That is, the item that is removable is usable by the receiver of the greeting card, but does not facilitate further communication between the sender of the card and the receiver. For example, parents often send greeting cards (e.g. a birthday card) to a son/daughter who is in college or otherwise away from home. In such case, the parents would like to hear from the child acknowledging receipt of the card. It would therefore be desirable to provide means to facilitate and promote further communication, that is, for the child to have means to readily contact his/her parents. In other words, it is advantageous to provide a dynamic arrangement with the greeting card, such that further communication between the sender and receiver is facilitated and promoted.

In addition, it is also desirable to provide printed material (i.e., indicia) on the greeting card and/or the detachable item so as to provide an association between the greeting card and detachable item that reminds the receiver of the greeting card, at a later time, to communicate with the sender of the greeting card. Generally, however, there is no such association. For example, a greeting card may have a picture removably secured thereto, but there is no indicia on the picture once it is removed from the greeting card to associate the picture with the message printed in the card, let alone facilitate and promote further communication between the sender and receiver of the greeting card.

Advertising and promotional materials such as letters enclosed in envelopes and flyers are routinely sent to potential customers in order to enlighten the potential customers as to the existence of a specific company and to encourage the potential customers to purchase the goods or services provided by the company. Companies often provide a promotional product or special offer with the advertising material in the hope that the product or offer will somehow

persuade the customer to purchase the goods or services provided by the company. With the recent popularity of phone cards, companies have recognized the convenience (due to the small size and discounted purchase price as compared to the face value) of providing phone cards having a predetermined monetary value (at no charge to the customer). While serving a purpose of establishing good will with potential customers by providing a free gift, these prior art phone cards do not serve to maintain the company's name in the consciousness of the potential customer so as to remind the potential customer of the goods/services which the company provides.

OBJECTS AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a combination greeting card and phone card that facilitates further communication between the sender and receiver of the combination.

It is still another object of the present invention to provide a combination greeting card and phone card that readily provides the receiver of the combination with means for contacting the sender.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a combination greeting card and phone card in which the phone card is removably attached to the greeting card.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a combination greeting card and phone card that provides a message (i.e., indicia) on the greeting card and/or the phone card.

It is a still further object of the present invention to provide a combination greeting card and phone card in which a message on the phone card provides an association with the greeting card.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a combination carrier document and phone card, wherein the phone card maintains the identity of the sender of the combination in the consciousness of the receiver of the combination.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a combination carrier document and phone card in which the phone card is removably affixed to the carrier document.

It is yet another object of the present invention to
5 provide a combination carrier document and phone card that provides a first message on the carrier document and a second message on the phone card which serves as advertising for the sender of the combination.

It is a further object of the present invention to
10 provide a combination carrier document and phone card in which a message on the phone card is associated with a message on the carrier document.

It is still a further object of the present invention to overcome inherent disadvantages of known advertisements which
15 include a phone card.

In accordance with an aspect of the present invention, a combination includes a greeting card, a phone card and an arrangement for removably attaching the phone card to the greeting card.

20 In one embodiment, the arrangement includes a release adhesive which releasably secures the phone card to the greeting card.

In another embodiment, the greeting card comprises at least one planar sheet, the phone card is formed as part of
25 the at least one planar sheet of the greeting card, and the arrangement includes perforations in the at least one planar sheet in surrounding relation to the phone card for enabling detachment of the phone card from the at least one planar sheet.

30 In still another embodiment, the at least one planar sheet of the greeting card includes slits which receive a peripheral portion of the phone card.

In yet another embodiment, the arrangement includes a pocket secured to the at least one planar sheet, the pocket
35 having one side which is open to receive the phone card therein. In such case, the pocket is transparent or translucent.

Preferably, the greeting card includes a front planar sheet having a front outer surface and an inner surface, and a rear planar sheet having a rear outer surface and an inner surface, the front and rear planar sheets are coupled together
5 along a fold line such that the inner surfaces of the front and rear planar sheets are superposed when the greeting card is in a closed configuration.

In yet another embodiment, the phone card is removably attached to one of the inner surfaces of the front and rear
10 planar sheets.

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, a combination includes a greeting card, a phone card, an arrangement for releasably holding the phone card to the greeting card; and a message on at least one of the
15 greeting card and the phone card which associates each with the other.

In one embodiment, the inner surface of the rear planar sheet includes writing (i.e., indicia) in substantial alignment with the phone card, such that when the phone card
20 is detached from the front planar sheet so as to leave an opening in the front planar sheet, the indicia on the inner surface of the rear planar sheet is visible through the opening.

In another embodiment, the greeting card includes a front
25 planar sheet having a front outer surface and a front inner surface, a rear planar sheet having a rear outer surface and a rear inner surface, the front and rear planar sheets being coupled together along a fold line such that the inner surfaces of the front and rear planar sheets are superposed
30 when the greeting card is in a closed configuration, a planar flap coupled to an edge of the rear planar sheet substantially opposite the fold line, and perforations are provided in the planar flap.

In such case, the planar flap can be permanently secured
35 to the inner surface of the rear planar sheet. In addition, the inner surface of the rear planar sheet includes indicia, in substantial alignment with the phone card so that when the

phone card is detached from the planar flap so as to leave an opening in the planar flap, the indicia on the inner surface of the rear planar sheet is visible through the opening.

5 In another embodiment, the greeting card includes a front planar sheet having a front outer surface and a front inner surface, a rear planar sheet having a rear outer surface and a rear inner surface, the front and rear planar sheets being coupled along a fold line such that the inner surfaces of the front and rear planar sheets are superposed when the greeting
10 card is in a closed configuration, a planar flap secured to the inner surface of the rear planar sheet, and the perforations are provided in the planar flap.

In accordance with another form of the present invention, the combination includes a carrier document for communicating
15 a first message from a sender to a recipient of the combination, and a communication access card for use by either the recipient of the combination or another user. The communication access card conveys a second message, which has an association with the first message, to either the recipient
20 or another user of the communication access card each time the communication access card is accessed.

In accordance with another form of the present invention, the combination includes a carrier document for communicating a first message from a sender to a recipient of the
25 combination and a debit card for use by one of the recipient and another user, the debit card conveying a second message, which has an association with the first message, to one of the recipient and the user of the debit card each time the debit card is accessed.

30 In accordance with another form of the present invention, an advertising system includes a carrier document for communicating a first message from a sender to a recipient and a communication access card for use by one of the recipient and another user, the communication access card conveying a
35 second message, which has an association with the first message, to one of the recipient and the user of the

communication access card each time the communication access card is accessed.

The above and other objects, features and advantages of the invention will become readily apparent from the following detailed description thereof which is to be read in connection with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a combination greeting card and phone card according to a first embodiment of the present invention, with the greeting card in a closed configuration;

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the combination of Fig. 1, with the greeting card in an open configuration and with the phone card removably attached thereto;

Fig. 3 is an exploded perspective view of the combination of Fig. 1, wherein the phone card is detached from the greeting card;

Fig. 3A is a cross-sectional view of the phone card of Fig. 3, taken along line 3A-3A thereof;

Fig. 4 is a perspective view of a combination greeting card and phone card according to a second embodiment of the present invention, with the greeting card in an open configuration;

Fig. 5 is a perspective view of the combination of Fig. 4, wherein the phone card is detached from the greeting card;

Fig. 6 is a perspective view of a combination greeting card and phone card according to a third embodiment of the present invention, with the greeting card in an open configuration;

Fig. 7 is a perspective view of a combination greeting card and phone card according to a fourth embodiment of the present invention, wherein the phone card is detached from the greeting card;

Fig. 8 is a perspective view of a combination greeting card and phone card according to a fifth embodiment of the

present invention, with the greeting card in an open configuration;

Fig. 8A is a cross-sectional view of the phone card of Fig. 8 removably attached to the greeting card, taken along
5 line 8A-8A thereof;

Fig. 9 is a perspective view of the combination greeting card and phone card of Fig. 8, wherein the phone card is detached from the greeting card;

Fig. 10 is a fragmentary plan view of a portion of a
10 combination greeting card and phone card according to a sixth embodiment of the present invention, showing an alternate slit arrangement for retaining the phone card;

Fig. 11 is a fragmentary plan view of a portion of a
15 combination greeting card and phone card according to a seventh embodiment of the present invention, showing an alternate slit arrangement for retaining the phone card;

Fig. 12 is a fragmentary plan view of a portion of a
20 combination greeting card and phone card according to an eighth embodiment of the present invention, showing an alternate slit arrangement for retaining the phone card;

Fig. 13 is a perspective view of a combination greeting card and phone card according to a ninth embodiment of the present invention, with the greeting card in an open configuration;

Fig. 13A is a cross-sectional view of the phone card of Fig. 13 removably attached to the greeting card, taken along
25 line 13A-13A thereof;

Fig. 14 is a perspective view of a combination greeting card and phone card according to a tenth embodiment of the
30 present invention, with the greeting card in an open configuration;

Fig. 14A is a cross-sectional view of the phone card of Fig. 14 removably attached to the greeting card, taken along
line 14A-14A thereof;

Fig. 15 is a fragmentary plan view of a portion of a
35 combination greeting card and phone card according to an

eleventh embodiment of the present invention, showing an alternate securing arrangement;

Fig. 15A is a cross-sectional view of the phone card of Fig. 15 removably attached to the greeting card, taken along
5 line 15A-15A thereof;

Fig. 16 is a top plan view of a combination carrier document and phone card according to a first embodiment of the present invention; and

Fig. 17 is a top plan view of the combination of Fig. 1, wherein the phone card has a specific shape which has an
10 association with at least one of the first and second messages.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to the drawings in detail, and initially to
15 Figs. 1-3A, a combination greeting card/phone card 10 in accordance with a first embodiment of the present invention is shown. The combination greeting card/phone card includes a greeting card portion 12 and a phone card portion 14 removably attached to greeting card portion.

20 Specifically, greeting card 12, which can be made of any suitable card stock, paper stock, and the like, includes a front planar sheet 16 having a front outer surface 18 and a front inner surface 20, and a rear planar sheet 22 having a rear outer surface 24 and a rear inner surface 26. Front and
25 rear planar sheets 16 and 22 are connected together along a fold/score line (binding) 28 such that the inner surfaces 20 and 26 of front and rear planar sheets are superposed when the greeting card 12 is in a closed configuration. In a preferred form of the invention, the front planar sheet and the rear
30 planar sheet are contiguous with one another. Preferably, front and rear planar sheets 16 and 22 have a substantially rectangular shape, although it is foreseen that triangular, square, circular, oval, pentagonal and hexagonal shaped sheets may be utilized.

35 In accordance with the first embodiment of the present invention, phone card 14 is integrally formed from at least a

portion of front planar sheet 16 by perforations lines 30. The phone card can be removed (i.e., detached) from the greeting card 12 by separating the phone card from the front planar sheet along perforations 30. Phone card 14 preferably includes a message area 32 (Fig. 1) on a front surface thereof which includes a message, and an information area 34 (Fig. 2) on a rear surface thereof which includes information, instructions and/or an account number for making and charging a telephone call to an account number assigned to the phone card 14.

Preferably, the card stock that is utilized to form the phone card 14 includes a plastic laminate 36, 38 applied to the front and back surfaces thereof, as shown in Fig. 3A to provide a relatively sturdy and durable card.

In the first embodiment, greeting card 12 also preferably includes a message (i.e., indicia). One such message 17 is preferably provided on the front outer surface 18 of front planar sheet 16. In addition, a message 42 may be provided on the rear inner surface 26. Preferably, message 42 is in substantial alignment with phone card 14 such that when phone card 14 is detached from front planar sheet 16 as shown in Fig. 3 (and an opening 40 through front planar sheet 16 results), message 42 on rear inner surface 26 is visible through opening 40. For example, message 42 could read, "I love you. Please call me." As such, message 42 contained on rear inner surface 26 is associated with phone card 14, and preferably also associated with the message contained in message area 32 on phone card 14, to facilitate and promote further communication between the sender of the greeting card and the receiver, and thereby provide a dynamic arrangement.

Referring now to Figs. 4 and 5, a combination greeting card/phone card 10a according to a second embodiment of the present invention will now be described, in which elements corresponding to those of the greeting card/phone card combination 10 of Figs. 1-3A are identified by the same reference numerals.

The second embodiment includes a front planar sheet 16, a rear planar sheet 22 and a planar flap 44 which is preferably contiguous with the rear planar sheet 22. Planar flap 44 is preferably folded about fold/score line (binding) 46 so as to be substantially superposed with inner surface 26 of rear planar sheet 22. Planar flap 44 is preferably secured to rear inner surface 26 by adhesive 48.

In accordance with the second embodiment, phone card 14 is integrally formed from at least a portion of planar flap 44 by perforations 30a. The phone card 14 can be removed (i.e., detached) from the planar flap 44 by separating the phone card from the planar flap along perforations 30a. In order to facilitate the removal of phone card 14, notches 31 are provided in planar flap 44 and connected with perforations 30a, so that a person can use his/her fingernails or fingers to more easily grip phone card 14 to separate the phone card from planar flap 44. Phone card 14 preferably has a message area 32 on the front surface thereof which includes a message (shown in phantom), and an information area (not shown) on the rear surface thereof containing information, instructions and/or an account number for making and charging a telephone call to an account number assigned to the phone card 14.

In the second embodiment, greeting card 12 also preferably includes a message. One such message 17 (not shown in Figs. 4 and 5) is preferably provided on the front outer surface 18 of front planar sheet 16. In addition, a message 42 may be provided on the rear inner surface 26. Preferably, message 42 is in substantial alignment with phone card 14 such that when phone card 14 is detachably removed from front planar sheet 16 as shown in Fig. 5 (and an opening 40a results in planar flap 44), message 42 on rear inner surface 26 is visible through opening 40a.

Of course, it will be appreciated that the aforementioned arrangement of planar flap 44 and phone card 14 could be provided in association with front planar sheet 16 and inner surface 20.

Referring now to Fig. 6, a greeting card/phone card combination 10b according to a third embodiment of the present invention will now be described, in which elements corresponding to those of the greeting card/phone card combinations of Figs. 1-3 and/or 4-5 are identified by the same reference numerals.

In the third embodiment, planar flap 44 is not secured by adhesive 48 to the rear inner surface 26 of rear planar sheet 22. Alternatively, planar flap 44 is merely hinged to rear planar sheet 22 along fold line (binding) 46. As such, there is no longer a need for cut out areas 31 (Figs. 4 and 5) since the planar flap 44 can be rotated about fold line 46 (binding) so that the planar flap is not laying substantially against the rear planar sheet 22. Therefore, phone card 14 can be relatively easily accessed for detachment from the planar flap 44. The remaining construction of the third embodiment is substantially identical to that of greeting card/phone card combination 10a of Figs. 4 and 5.

With the aforementioned arrangement of Fig. 6, the phone card (not shown in Fig. 6) is merely pushed out to separate it from planar flap 44, thereby creating an opening 40b. When planar flap 44 is rotated about fold line (binding) 46 so as to overlap rear planar sheet 22, the message 42 can be viewed through opening 40a. In addition, message 42 can be viewed when greeting card 12 is in the open, expanded configuration shown in Fig. 6.

Referring now to Fig. 7, a greeting card/phone card combination 10c according to a fourth embodiment of the present invention will now be described, in which elements corresponding to those of the greeting card/phone card combination of Figs. 1-3, 4-5 and 6 are identified by the same reference numerals.

The fourth embodiment is substantially identical to the second embodiment described in connection with Figs. 4 and 5, except that planar flap 44a is not hinged to rear planar sheet 22 along a fold line (binding). Instead, the planar flap 44a is a separate sheet that is preferably non-contiguous with the

rear planar sheet and is permanently adhered to rear inner surface 26 of rear planar sheet 22 by adhesive 48a. Thus, as with the greeting card/phone card combination 10a of Figs. 4 and 5, message 42 can be viewed through opening 40a when phone card 14 is detached from planar flap 44a along perforations 30a.

Of course, it will be appreciated that the aforementioned arrangement of planar flap 44a and phone card 14 could be provided in association with front planar sheet 16 and front inner surface 20.

Referring now to Figs. 8, 8A and 9, a greeting card/phone card combination 10d according to a fifth embodiment of the present invention will now be described, in which elements corresponding to those of the greeting card/phone card combination of Figs. 1-3, 4-5, 6 and 7 are identified by the same reference numerals. The fifth embodiment includes front planar sheet 16 contiguous with rear planar sheet 22 which can be rotated to a superposed position about fold/score line (binding) 28.

In the fifth embodiment, arcuate slits 50 are formed in rear planar sheet 22 at positions substantially corresponding to corners of phone card 14 so as to form tabs. Accordingly, the corners of phone card 14 are preferably positioned through slits 50 and under the corresponding tabs so as to releasably secure the phone card 14 to rear inner surface 26 of rear planar sheet 22 (see Fig. 8A). As shown in Fig. 9, when phone card 14 is removed, the message 42 on inner surface 26 of rear planar sheet 22 is uncovered and can be viewed by the receiver. While not shown in Figs. 8 and 9, it is foreseen that the front planar sheet 16 may include a cut out or transparent portion such that the message 42 printed on the rear inner surface 26 is visible when the front planar sheet 16 is superposed with the rear planar sheet 22 after the phone card has been removed.

Referring now to Figs. 10-12, modifications of the slit and tab arrangement of the greeting card/phone card combination 10d of Figs. 8 and 9 is shown.

In accordance with a sixth embodiment shown in Fig. 10, two diagonally offset slits 50a (and corresponding tabs) are provided in rear planar sheet 22 (i.e., bottom left and top right, or bottom right and top left) for removably securing
5 phone card 14 to the rear inner surface 26 thereof.

In accordance with a seventh embodiment shown in Fig. 11, four arcuate slits 50b (forming tabs) are provided in rear planar sheet 22 at positions corresponding to four sides (top, bottom, right, left) of phone card 14 for removably securing
10 phone card 14 to the rear inner surface 26 thereof.

In accordance with an eighth embodiment shown in Fig. 12, four sets of double slits 50c are provided in rear planar sheet 22 at positions corresponding to the corners (top right, top left, bottom right, bottom left) of phone card 14 in order
15 to form holding straps 52 to removably secure phone card 14 to the inner surface 26 thereof.

Referring now to Figs. 13 and 13A, a greeting card/phone combination 10e according to a ninth embodiment of the present invention will now be described, in which elements
20 corresponding to those of combination 10d of Figs. 8 and 9 are identified by the same reference numerals.

In the ninth embodiment, the greeting card/phone card combination 10e includes, a pocket 54 (preferably made of a substantially translucent and/or transparent material) which
25 is secured to rear inner surface 26 of rear planar sheet 22. The pocket 54 is preferably secured, along its lower edge 54a (i.e., bottom) and side edges 54b and 54c (such as by an adhesive and the like), leaving an opening 54d at its top edge. In this manner, phone card 14 can be received in pocket
30 54 via opening (unsecured side) 54d, as shown in Fig. 13. When the phone card 14 is removed from pocket 54, a message (not shown in Fig. 13) on the rear inner surface 26 of rear planar sheet 22 is visible through pocket 54.

Referring now to Figs. 14 and 14A, a greeting card/phone
35 card combination 10f according to a tenth embodiment of the present invention will now be discussed, in which elements

corresponding to those of combination 10d of Figs. 8 and 9 are identified by the same reference numerals.

5 In the tenth embodiment, phone card 14 is adhered to rear inner surface 26 of rear planar sheet 22 by release or rub off adhesive 56. When phone card 14 is removed, a message 42 (not shown in Fig. 14) on rear inner surface 26 can be viewed and read by the receiver of the card.

10 Of course, it will be appreciated that the aforementioned arrangement could be provided in association with inner surface 20 or outer surface 18 of front planar sheet 16, instead of the arrangement shown in Figs. 14 and 14A.

Referring now to Figs. 15 and 15A, a greeting card/phone card combination 10g according to an eleventh embodiment of the present invention will now be described, in which elements 15 corresponding to those of combination 10f of Figs. 14 and 14A are identified by the same reference numerals.

20 In the eleventh embodiment, phone card 14 is releasably held to inner surface 26 of rear planar sheet 22 by VELCRO™ strips 58 comprised of VELCRO hooks 58a on phone card 14 and VELCRO loops 58b on rear inner surface 26 of rear planar sheet 22. When phone card 14 is removed, a message (not shown in Fig. 15) printed on rear inner surface 26 can be viewed and read by a recipient of the card.

25 Of course, it will be appreciated that the aforementioned arrangement could be provided in association with the front planar sheet 16 and front inner surface 22 as opposed to the arrangement shown in Figs. 15 and 15A.

30 Thus, in all of the above embodiments, a phone card 14 is detachably secured to a greeting card 12. When the greeting card/phone card combination is given to a recipient, the recipient is thereby prompted (i.e., reminded) to place a telephone call to (contact) the sender of the greeting card/phone card combination, thereby facilitating and promoting a continued interchange in a dynamic arrangement.

35 It is foreseen that the messages contained on greeting card 12 and/or phone card 14 are associated with one another, thereby further aiding in the dynamic arrangement in order to

remind and prompt the receiver of the greeting card/phone card combination to place a call to the sender of the card.

Further, it is foreseen that for the purpose of discouraging theft, the greeting card/phone card combination would be on display in stores with inactive phone cards, wherein cards which contain active charge (debit) account numbers are maintained behind a counter or other secure location. It is also foreseen that inactive phone cards provided in the greeting card/phone card combination could be activated at the time of purchase by a store clerk. In this situation, the store clerk could contact the phone company which sponsors the card to indicate that the charge (debit) account number provided on the phone card should now be activated. It is also foreseen that the store clerk could register a specific monetary value (\$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, etc.) selected by the purchaser at the point of sale to the phone card, so that a phone card having a specified monetary value can be provided from the sender to the recipient. It is also foreseen that the purchaser of the card could activate the phone card himself via a telephone or computer and/or credit card so as to provide any desired monetary gift to the card recipient.

While the above-identified invention has been described in relation to a greeting card/phone card combination, it is foreseen that in addition to phone cards, other items such as internet access cards, and video conference access cards and debit cards can be substituted for phone cards to facilitate and promote further communication between the sender of the greeting card and the recipient. It is also foreseen that the access (i.e., debit) card included within the greeting card could be programmed for a specific purpose by the store clerk which would facilitate and promote further communication between the sender and recipient. In this particular embodiment, the debit card is similar to a gift certificate wherein the card can only be used by the recipient for the purpose intended by the sender. For example, a parent who would like to pay for the child's trip home from college would

have the clerk program a specified monetary amount on the card for use to buy a plane ticket on a specific airline from the airport closest to the college to the home town airport. Likewise, bus and rail tickets could be provided in the same manner.

In order to discourage theft of the greeting card/phone card combination during the course of mail delivery, it is foreseen that the gift card could be provided with a toll-free telephone number that must be called by the card recipient to activate the phone card. At the time of activation, the recipient would be required to provide identification data (for example; social security number, mother's maiden name, etc.) to an operator or computer. Alternatively, a specific question could be asked by the operator or computer, which question and answer are previously provided to the company issuing the card by the purchaser of the greeting card/telephone card combination. When a correct answer to the question is given, the card would be activated by the issuing company.

Referring now to Fig. 16, a combination carrier document/communication access card 110 in accordance with the present invention is shown. Communication access card is meant to include phone cards, internet access cards/discs, debit cards, smart cards and the like. For simplicity in this discussion, phone card will be used hereinafter. The combination carrier document/phone card includes a carrier document 112 and a phone card 114 removably attached to the carrier document. It is foreseen that the phone card need not be attached to the carrier document but could be sent to the recipient, unaffixed to, but along with the carrier document. For example, the phone card could be contained and held within the carrier document if the carrier document is folded upon itself along fold lines 116 and 118.

The carrier document 112 can be made of any suitable paper stock, cardboard stock, plastic and the like. The carrier document includes at least a first message 120 for communicating an idea, such as an advertisement for a company,

to the recipient of the combination. The phone card 114, which is provided to the recipient with the carrier document, includes a second message 122. The second message is intended to be conveyed to the recipient of the combination each time the phone card is accessed or utilized. If the recipient gives the phone card to another person (that is another user), the second message will be provided to the other user of the phone card each time the phone card is accessed. Access is intended to mean at least the point in time when the phone card is removed from a storage location (for example, billfold, wallet and purse) so that it is visible to the user.

The second message 122 conveyed by the phone card 114 is preferably associated with the first message 120 of the carrier document 112 so as to remind the recipient of the first message (from the carrier document) or to advise the user (if the user is different from the recipient) of the company that provided the phone card. For example, the combination may be sent by an automobile dealership to a potential customer whose car lease is known to expire shortly. The carrier document (for example, advertising letter) may introduce the current models being sold by the automobile dealership and explain special incentives (for example, sale prices or rebates) being offered on selected models. The advertising letter advises the recipient of the combination that a phone card is enclosed for use by the recipient. The advertising material invites the recipient of the combination to visit the dealership to see the new models, discuss the special deals available and test drive an automobile. The recipient is invited to use the telephone card to call the dealership to make an appointment with a sales representative. The advertising material on the carrier document may advise the recipient that additional free minutes will be added to the phone card just for calling to schedule an appointment, and more free minutes will be added upon visiting the dealership.

It is foreseen that the first message 120 may be a written communication on an advertising letter as explained

above. It is also foreseen that the carrier document could include an activation device (i.e., a button) for activating a micro-chip contained within the carrier document, which, when activated, conveys an audio (or video) communication to the recipient of the combination (that is, the carrier documents provides a verbal message). It is also foreseen that the carrier document is a videotape, compact disc, video disc, computer disc or the like which provides a visual, audio and/or written communication (or any combination thereof) to the recipient.

With regard to the second message 122 conveyed by the phone card 114, it is foreseen that the second message could be imprinted on a face of the phone card as shown in Fig. 16. It is also foreseen that when used, the phone card activates a prerecorded message which is replayed to the user each time the phone card is utilized to place a telephone call. With the increasing popularity of video conferencing and video communication, it is also foreseen that the second message is provided to the user of the phone card visually. For example, each time the phone card is used to enable an audio video connection (for example, by video phone or computer), a visual, audio and/or written communication (or any combination thereof) appears on a display screen which is attached to the communication device employed by the user. The second message may appear either before, during or after the user's communication with the third party.

In another embodiment of the present invention, the carrier document 112 includes a first identifying characteristic 124 and the phone card 114 includes a second identifying characteristic 126 which has an association with the first identifying characteristic. The identifying characteristic can be, for example, a company logo, trademark/servicemark or the like such that each time the phone card is accessed by the user, the user of the phone card is reminded of the message on the carrier document and/or the identity of the company that provided the phone card.

In another embodiment of the present invention, a message on the carrier document 112 advises the recipient that the phone card 114 must be activated prior to its use. In this embodiment, the recipient of the phone card may be invited to
5 contact a particular telephone number which may be the company that sent the combination (carrier document and phone card) or a marketing (or market research) company. The user may then be requested to provide certain information (marketing information) or answer survey questions for future marketing
10 of products in order to receive the free phone card minutes.

In another embodiment of the present invention as shown in Fig. 17, the phone card 128 is contoured to have a specific shape which has an association with the first message 120 contained on the carrier document 112. For example, if the
15 carrier document is sent by a car dealership, the phone card would have an automotive related shape (i.e., shape of a car) such that the user of the card has a second level of association between the phone card and the first message 120 (and therefore the sender of the combination).

In another embodiment of the present invention, the phone card 114 can only be utilized to provide a connection to specific telephone numbers. For example, if the sender of the carrier document is a mail-order company, the company can
20 selectively pay for the telephone charges for the telephone orders of their better customers by providing a phone card to specific customers. Therefore, the company would not have to provide a toll-free number which is routinely used by non-regular or non-customers.
25

In another embodiment of the present invention, the first message 120 on the carrier document 112 instructs the
30 recipient of the phone card 114 to call a specific telephone number in order to answer marketing questions so as to have additional free minutes applied to the phone card and to enter the recipient in a lottery or sweepstakes.

In another embodiment of the present invention, the first message 120 instructs the recipient of the phone card 114 to
35 bring the phone card to a particular location to activate the

phone card. For example, if the sender of the phone card is an automobile dealership, the recipient of the phone card would be instructed to bring the card to the car dealership and arrange for a test drive of a particular model in order to
5 have the phone card activated for a predetermined number of free telephone minutes.

While the above-identified invention has been described in relation to a carrier document/phone card combination, it is foreseen that in addition to phone cards, other items such
10 as internet access cards/discs, video conference access cards, smart cards and debit cards and the like can be substituted for phone cards. It is also foreseen that the carrier document need not be provided by direct mail advertising to a recipient. The carrier document could be a page within
15 newspaper wherein the phone card is integral with the newspaper page. The phone card could be removed from the newspaper page by cutting or folding along dotted/perforated lines which define the phone card on the newspaper page. It is also foreseen that the sender of the combination could be a
20 third party (for example, a marketing company) which performs the service of sending the combination on behalf of the advertiser (i.e. car dealership).

Having described specific preferred embodiments of the invention with reference to the accompanying drawings, it will
25 be appreciated that the present invention is not limited to those precise embodiments and that various changes and modifications can be effected therein by one of ordinary skill in the art without departing from the scope or spirit of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A combination comprising:
 - a greeting card;
 - a separate phone card;
 - an arrangement for removably attaching the phone5 card to the greeting card; and
 - indicia on at least one of said greeting card and
 - phone card for prompting a recipient of the combination to use
 - said phone card to make a telephone call using said phone card
 - to contact another party.
2. The combination according to claim 1, wherein the arrangement includes a release adhesive which releasably secures the phone card to the greeting card.
3. The combination according to claim 1, wherein the greeting card comprises at least one planar sheet, and wherein the phone card is formed as part of the at least one planar sheet of the greeting card, and the arrangement includes 5 perforations in the at least one planar sheet in surrounding relation to the phone card for enabling detachment of the phone card from the at least one planar sheet.
4. The combination according to claim 1, wherein the greeting card comprises at least one planar sheet, and wherein the at least one planar sheet of the greeting card includes slits which receive a peripheral portion of the phone card.
5. The combination according to claim 1, wherein the arrangement includes a pocket secured to the at least one planar sheet, the pocket being adapted to receive the phone card therein.
6. The combination according to claim 5, wherein the pocket is one of substantially transparent and substantially translucent.

7. The combination according to claim 1, wherein the greeting card includes a front planar sheet having a front outer surface and an inner surface, and a rear planar sheet having a rear outer surface and an inner surface, said front and rear planar sheets being coupled along a fold line such that the inner surfaces of the front and rear planar sheets are superposed when the greeting card is in a closed configuration.

8. The combination according to claim 7, wherein the at least one planar sheet further includes a planar flap coupled to an edge of the rear planar sheet substantially opposite the fold line, and the arrangement includes perforations in the planar flap in surrounding relation to the phone card for enabling detachment of the phone card from the flap.

9. The combination according to claim 7, wherein said phone card is removably attached to one of the inner surfaces of said front and rear planar sheets.

10. A combination comprising:
a greeting card;
a separate phone card;
an arrangement for removably attaching the phone card to the greeting card; and
indicia on at least one of said greeting card and said phone card which associates each with the other, said indicia prompting a recipient of the combination to make a telephone call using said phone card to contact another party.

11. The combination according to claim 10, wherein the arrangement includes a release adhesive which releasably secures the phone card to the greeting card.

12. The combination according to claim 10, wherein the greeting card comprises at least one planar sheet, and wherein the phone card is formed as part of the at least one planar

5 sheet of the greeting card, and the arrangement includes perforations in the at least one planar sheet in surrounding relation to the phone card for enabling detachment of the phone card from the at least one planar sheet.

5 13. The combination according to claim 12, wherein the greeting card includes a front planar sheet having a front outer surface and an inner surface, and a rear planar sheet having a rear outer surface and an inner surface, said front and rear planar sheets being coupled along a fold line such that the inner surfaces of the front and rear planar sheets are superposed when the greeting card is closed, and the perforations are provided in the front planar sheet.

5 14. The combination according to claim 13, wherein the inner surface of the rear planar sheet includes indicia in substantial alignment with the phone card, so that when the phone card is detached from the front planar sheet so as to leave an opening in the front planar sheet, the indicia on the inner surface of the rear planar sheet is visible through said opening.

15. The combination according to claim 12, wherein the greeting card comprises:

a front planar sheet having a front outer surface and a front inner surface,

5 a rear planar sheet having a rear outer surface and a rear inner surface, said front and rear planar sheets being coupled along a fold line such that the inner surfaces of the front and rear planar sheets are superposed when the greeting card is in a closed configuration,

10 a planar flap coupled to an edge of the rear planar sheet substantially opposite the fold line, wherein the perforations are provided in the planar flap.

16. The combination according to claim 15, wherein said planar flap is permanently secured to the inner surface of said rear planar sheet.

17. The combination according to claim 15, wherein the inner surface of the rear planar sheet includes indicia in substantial alignment with the phone card, so that when the phone card is detached from the planar flap so as to leave an opening in the planar flap, the indicia on the inner surface of the rear planar sheet is visible through said opening.

18. The combination according to claim 12, wherein the greeting card comprises:

a front planar sheet having a front outer surface and a front inner surface,

a rear planar sheet having a rear outer surface and a rear inner surface, said front and rear planar sheets being coupled along a fold line such that the inner surfaces of the front and rear planar sheets are superposed when the greeting card is in a closed configuration,

a planar flap secured to the inner surface of said rear planar sheet, wherein

the perforations are provided in the planar flap.

19. The combination according to claim 18, wherein the inner surface of the rear planar sheet includes indicia in substantial alignment with the phone card, so that when the phone card is detached from the planar flap so as to leave an opening in the planar flap, the indicia on the inner surface of the rear planar sheet is visible through said opening.

20. The combination according to claim 10, wherein the greeting card comprises at least one planar sheet having slits through at least a portion of the sheet which receive a peripheral portion of the phone card.

21. The combination according to claim 10, wherein the greeting card comprises at least one planar sheet and wherein the arrangement comprises a pocket secured to the at least one planar sheet, the pocket being adapted to receive the phone card therein.

22. The combination according to claim 21, wherein the pocket is one of transparent and translucent.

5 23. The combination according to claim 10, wherein the greeting card includes a front planar sheet having a front outer surface and an inner surface, and a rear planar sheet having a rear outer surface and an inner surface, said front and rear planar sheets being coupled along a fold line such that the inner surfaces of the front and rear planar sheets are superposed when the greeting card is closed and said phone card is detachably secured to one of said front and rear planar sheets.

5 24. The combination according to claim 10, wherein the greeting card comprises at least one planar sheet having indicia thereon substantially hidden by said phone card, the indicia being visible when said phone card is detached from said greeting card.

25. The combination according to claim 10, wherein each of said greeting card and said phone card include respective first and second indicia, and wherein the first indicia of the phone card is related to the second indicia of the greeting card.

26. In combination;
a greeting card;
a separate phone card adapted for removable coupling to the greeting card; and
5 indicia on at least one of the greeting card and phone card for prompting a recipient of the combination to

make a telephone call using said phone card to contact another party.

27. A greeting card comprising:
at least one planar sheet;
a separate phone card; and
indicia on at least one of said at least one planar
5 sheet and said phone card which associates each with the
other, said indicia prompting a recipient of the greeting card
to use said phone card to make a telephone call to contact
another party.

28. A greeting card comprising:
at least one planar sheet;
a debit card; and
indicia on at least one of said at least one planar
5 sheet and said debit card which associates each with the
other, said indicia prompting a recipient of the greeting card
to use said debit card to communicate with another party.

29. A greeting card comprising:
at least one planar sheet; and
a debit card which one of promotes and facilitates a
receiver of the greeting card to use the debit card to
5 communicate with another party.

30. The greeting card as defined by claim 29, further
comprising:
indicia on at least one of said at least one planar
sheet and said debit card which associates each with the
5 other.

31. The combination as defined by claim 1 wherein the
another party is a sender of the combination.

32. The combination as defined by claim 10 wherein the
another party is a sender of the combination.

33. The combination as defined by claim 26 wherein the another party is a sender of the combination.

34. A greeting card as defined by claim 27 wherein the another party is a sender of the greeting card.

35. A greeting card as defined by claim 28 wherein the another party is a sender of the greeting card.

36. A greeting card as defined by claim 29 wherein the another party is a sender of the greeting card.

37. A combination comprising:

a carrier document for communicating a first message from a sender to a recipient of the combination; and

5 a communication access card for use by one of the recipient and another user, the communication access card conveying a second message, which has an association with the first message, to one of the recipient and the user of the communication access card each time the communication access card is accessed.

38. The combination according to claim 37 wherein the first message comprises at least one of:

- a) a written communication;
- b) an audio communication; and
- 5 c) a visual communication.

39. The combination according to claim 37 wherein the second message comprises at least one of:

- a) a written communication;
- b) an audio communication; and
- 5 c) a visual communication.

40. The combination according to claim 37 wherein the second message requests the user of the communication access card to perform a specific action.

41. The combination according to claim 37 wherein the carrier document includes a first identifying characteristic, and wherein the communication access card includes a second identifying characteristic which has an association with the first identifying characteristic.

42. The combination according to claim 41 wherein the first and second identifying characteristics comprise indicia.

43. The combination according to claim 37 wherein when the communication card is used to establish a telecommunication connection, the second message is provided to the user of the communication access card at least one of prior, during or after the telecommunication connection is established with a third party.

44. The combination according to claim 37 wherein the first message is substantially similar to the second message.

45. The combination according to claim 37 wherein the communication access card is activated prior to use.

46. The combination according to claim 37 wherein the carrier document requests that the recipient use the communication access card to contact at least one of the sender or a third party to activate the communication access card.

47. The combination according to claim 37 wherein the first message requests the recipient to take a specific action, and wherein the second message conveys a reminder to the user to take the specific action.

48. The combination according to claim 45 wherein the activation of the communication access card comprises contacting at least one of the sender or a third party, to one

of respond to inquiries, provide information, give opinions
5 and answer survey questions.

49. The combination according to claim 37 wherein the communication access card is contoured to have a specific shape which has an association with the first message.

50. The combination according to claim 37 wherein the communication access card restricts the destinations with which a communication can be made.

51. The combination according to claim 45 wherein when the communication access card is activated, the user of the communication access card is enrolled in one of a lottery or sweepstakes.

52. The combination according to claim 37 wherein the first message prompts the recipient to activate the communication access card to receive a predetermined amount of free communication usage, and wherein the second message is an advertisement.

53. The combination according to claim 45 wherein the communication access card must be brought to a specific location in order for the communication access card to be activated.

54. The combination according to claim 37 wherein the communication access card is one of a phone card and internet access card/disc.

55. A combination comprising:
a carrier document for communicating a first message from a sender to a recipient of the combination; and
a debit card for use by one of the recipient and
5 another user, the debit card conveying a second message which has an association with the first message to one of the

recipient and the user of the debit card each time the debit card is accessed.

56. An advertising system comprising:

a carrier document for communicating a first message from a sender to a recipient; and

5 a communication access card for use by one of the recipient and another user, the communication access card conveying a second message which has an association with the first message to one of the recipient and the user of the communication access card each time the communication access card is accessed.

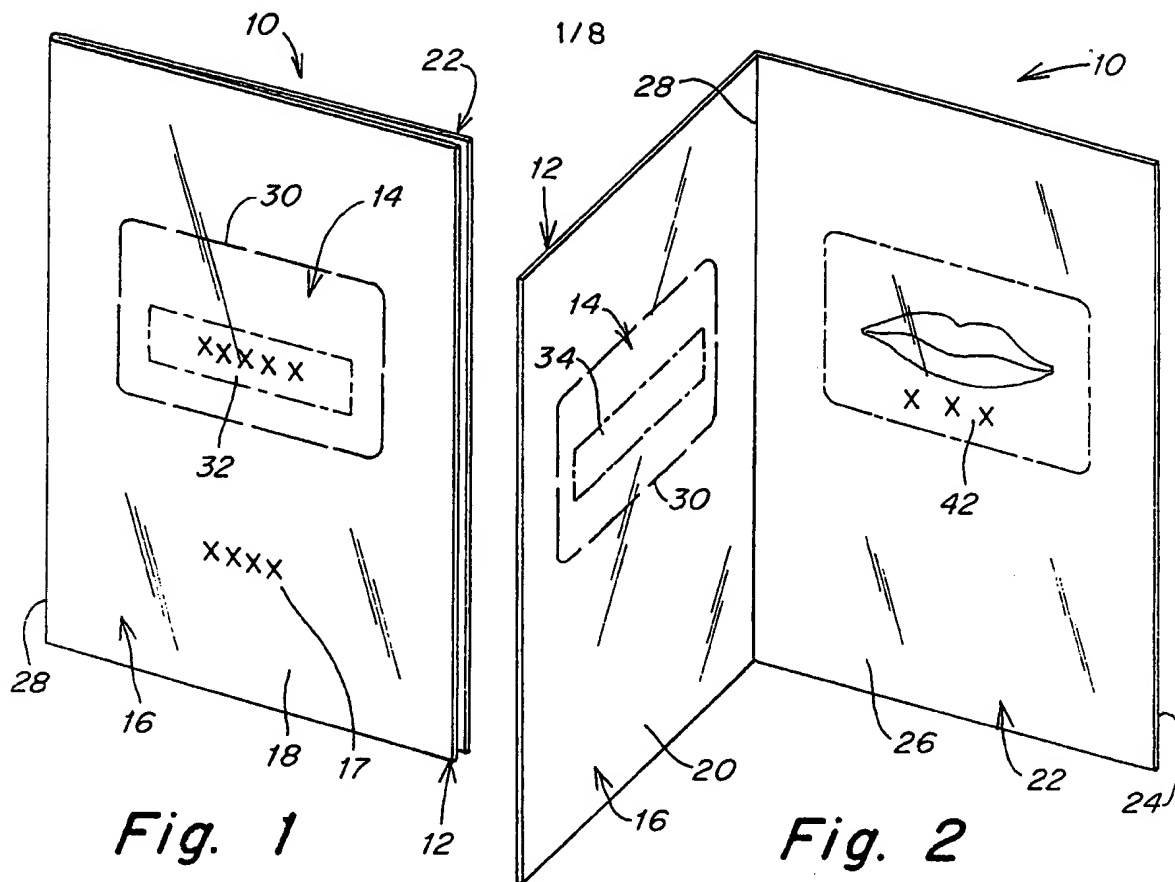


Fig. 3

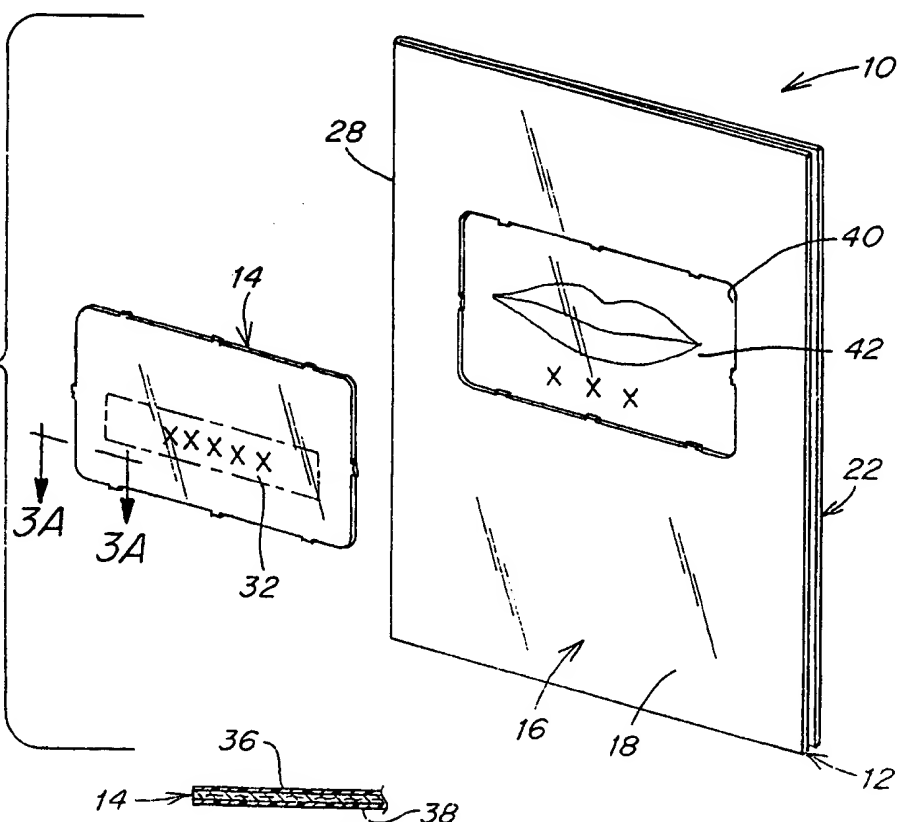
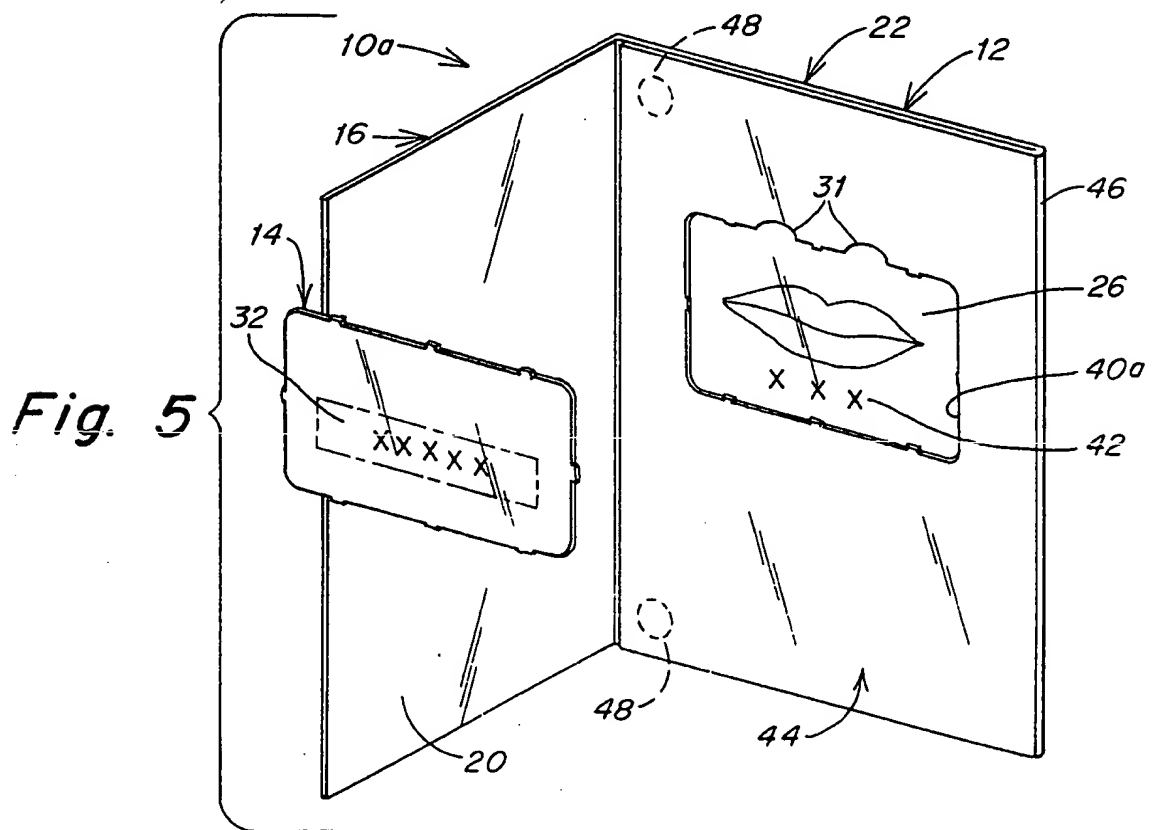
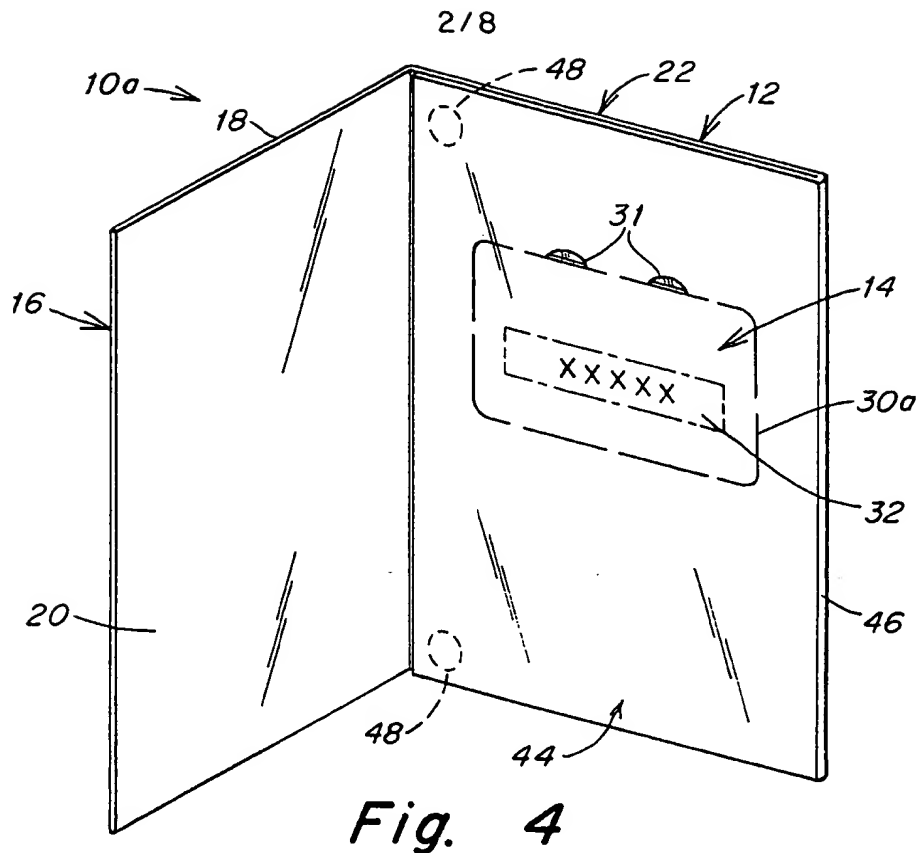
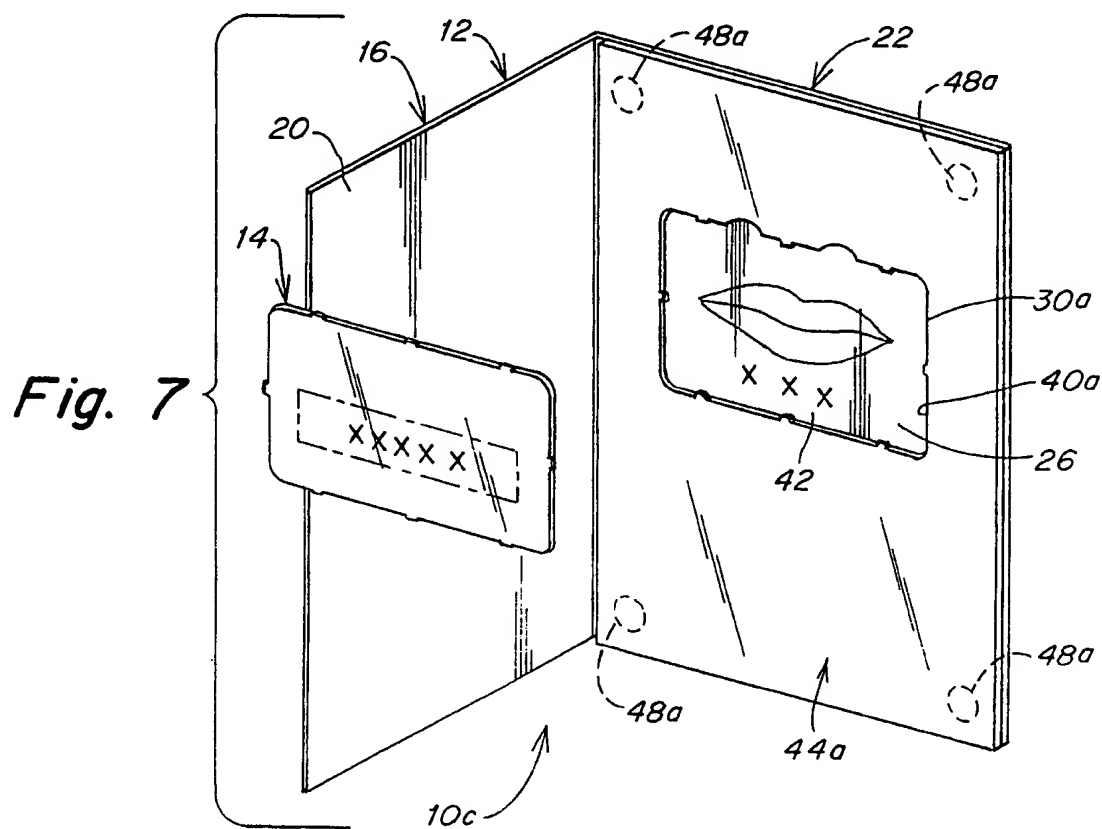
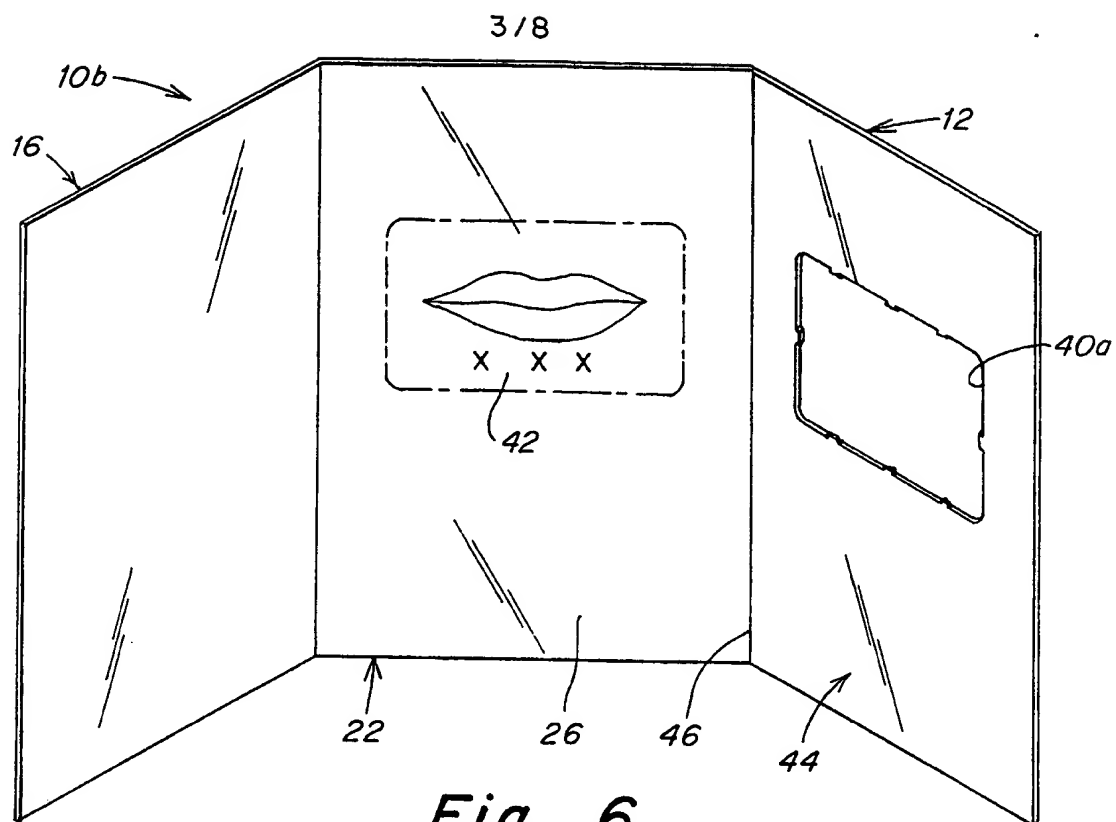
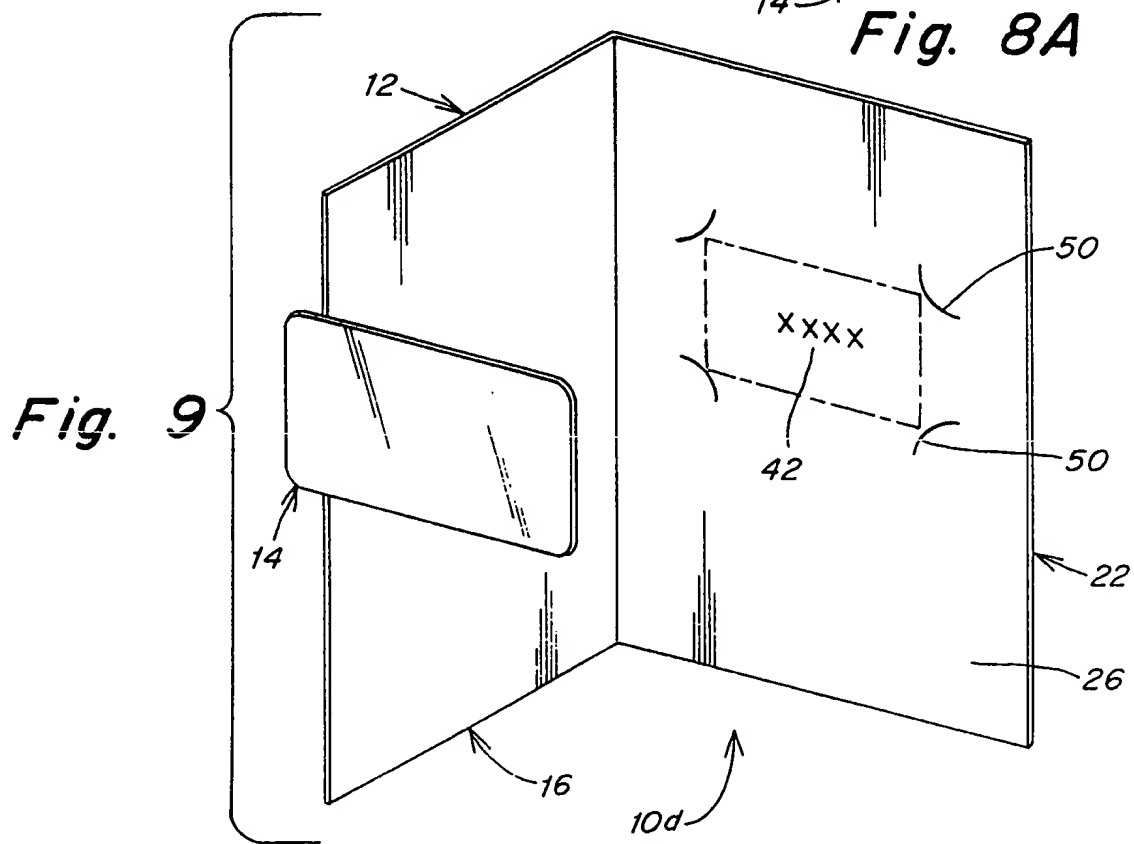
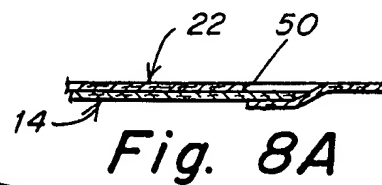
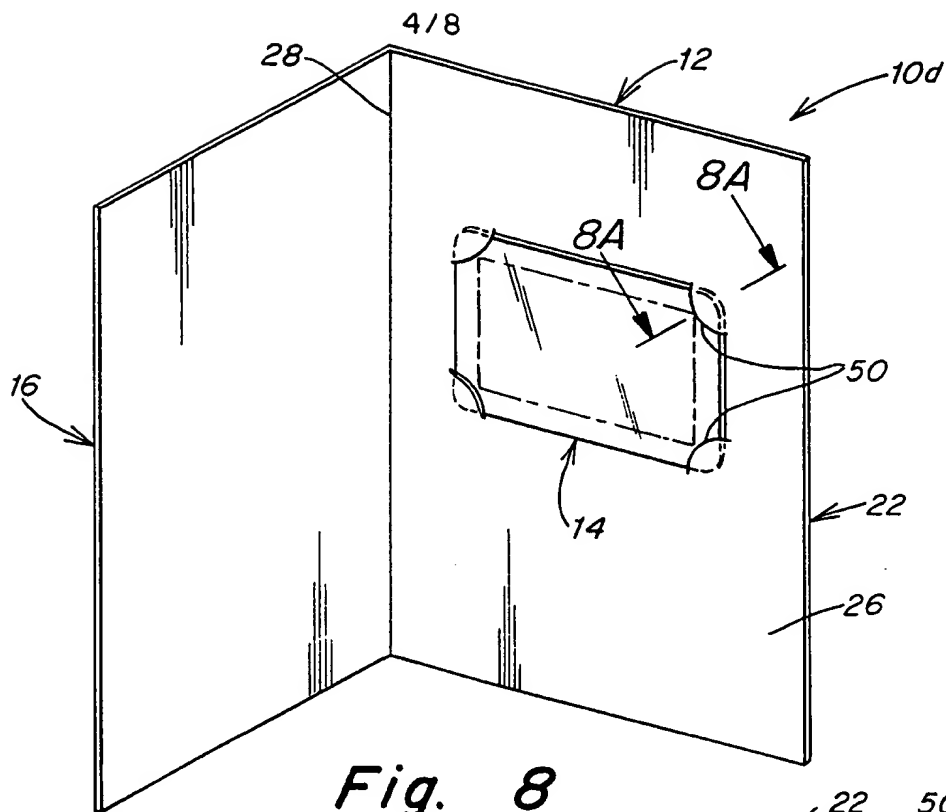


Fig. 3A







5/8

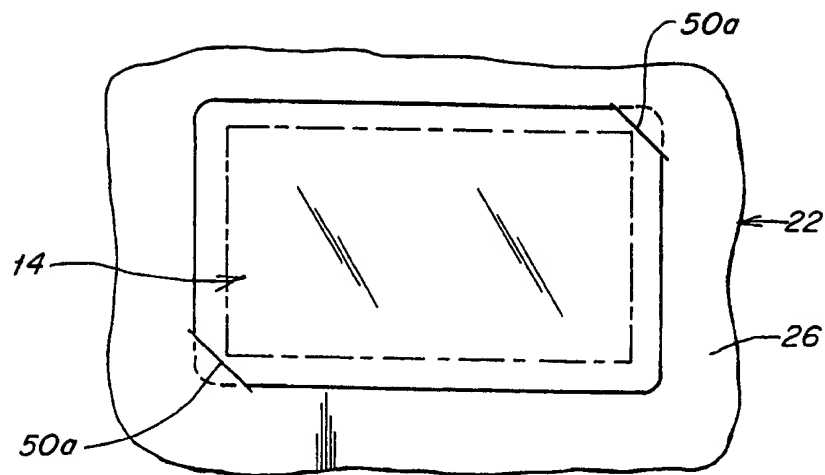


Fig. 10

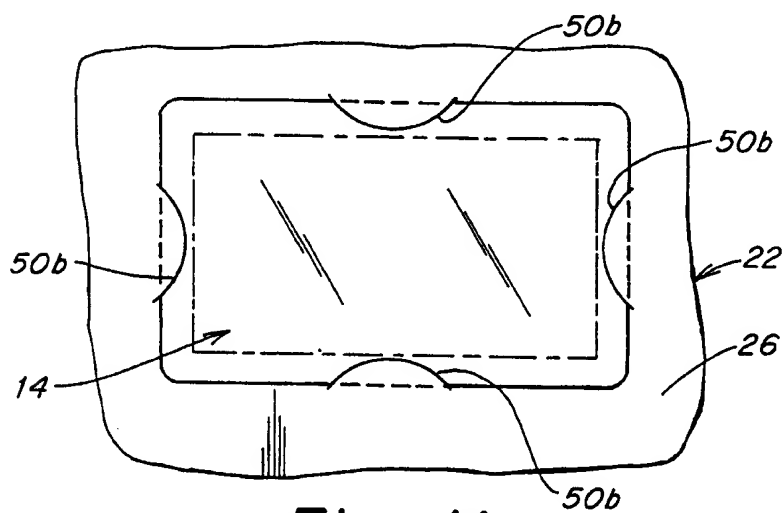


Fig. 11

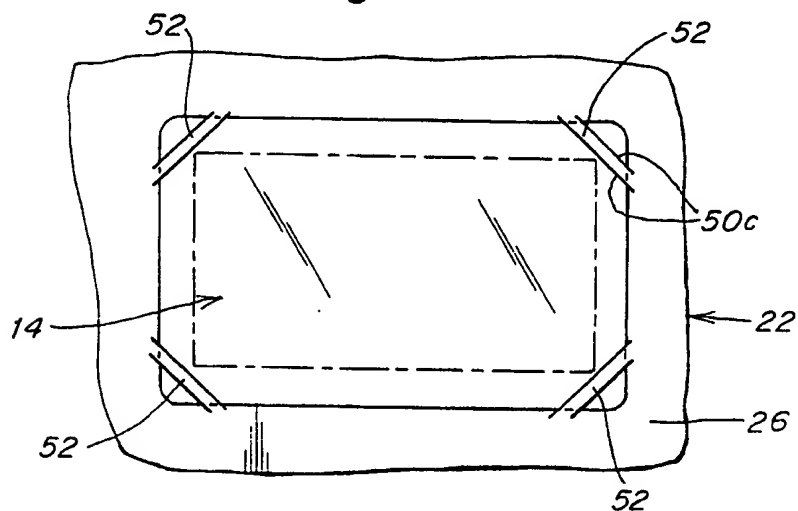


Fig. 12

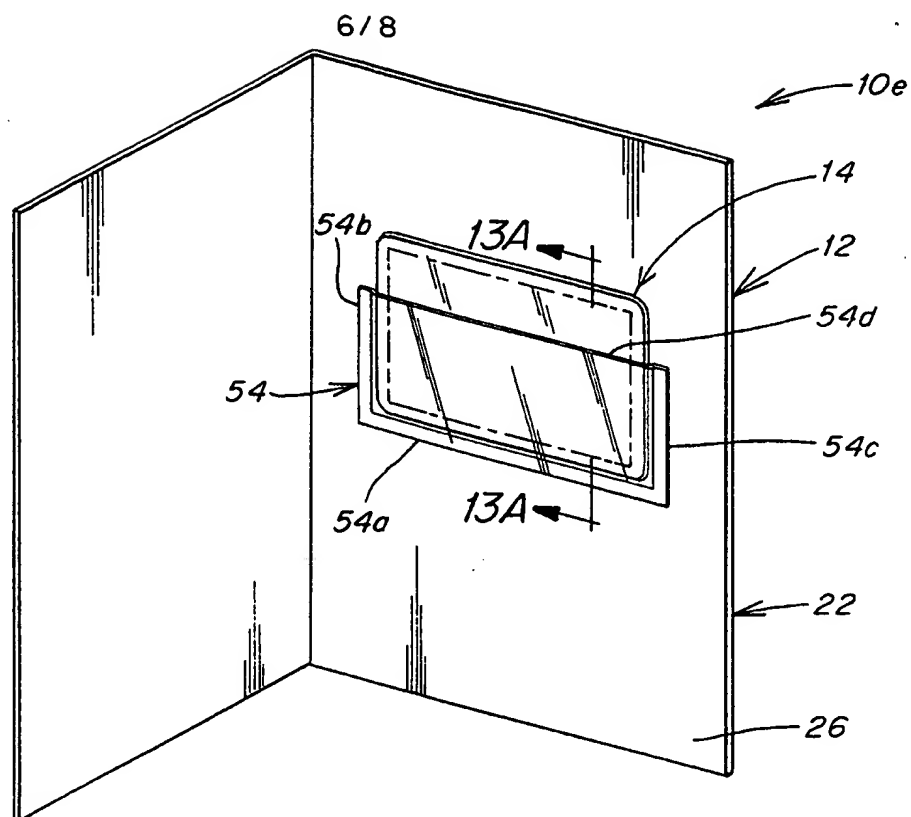


Fig. 13

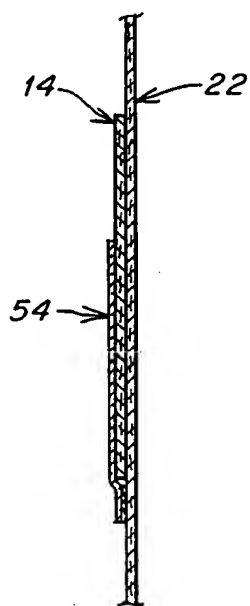


Fig. 13A

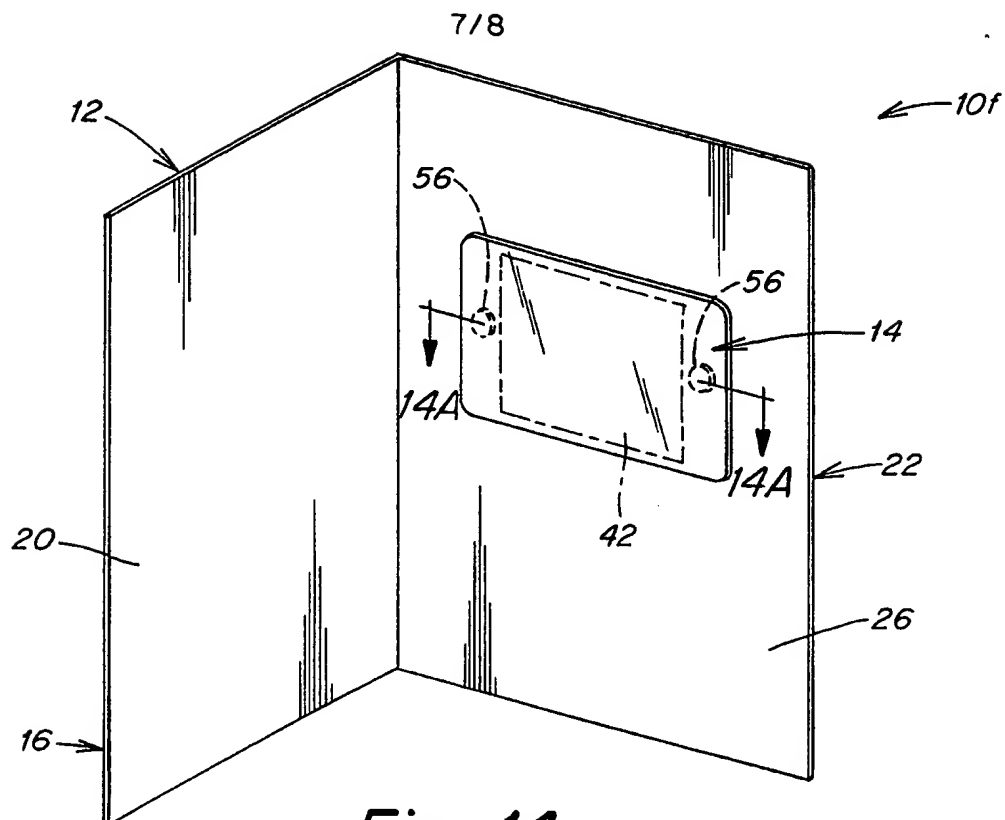


Fig. 14

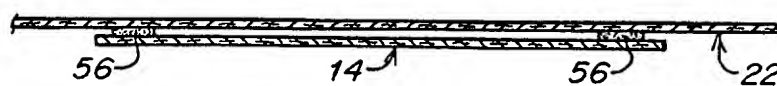


Fig. 14A

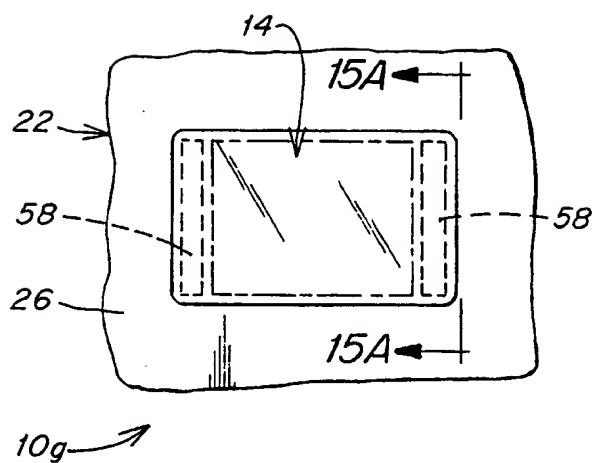


Fig. 15

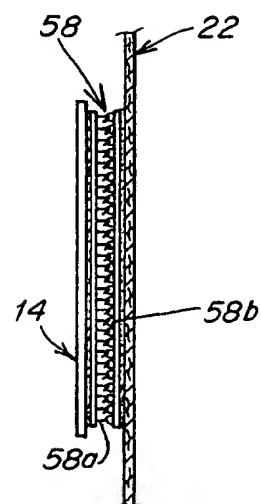
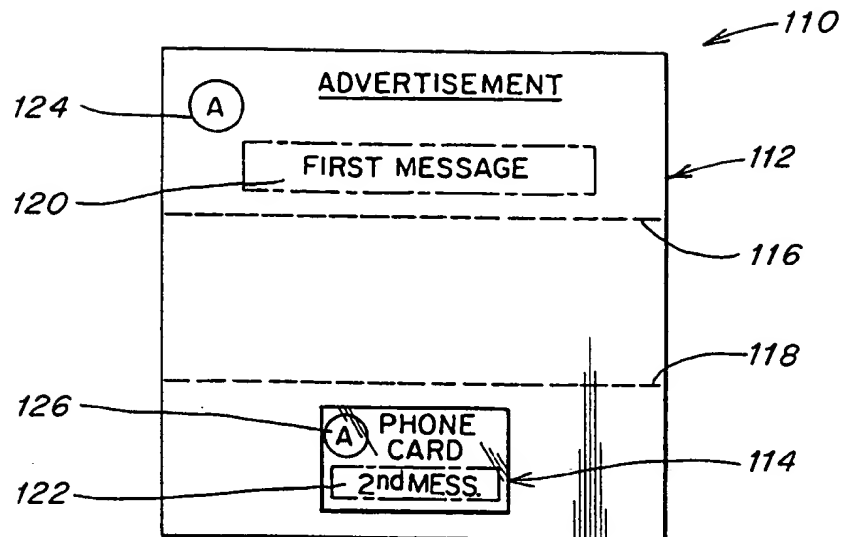
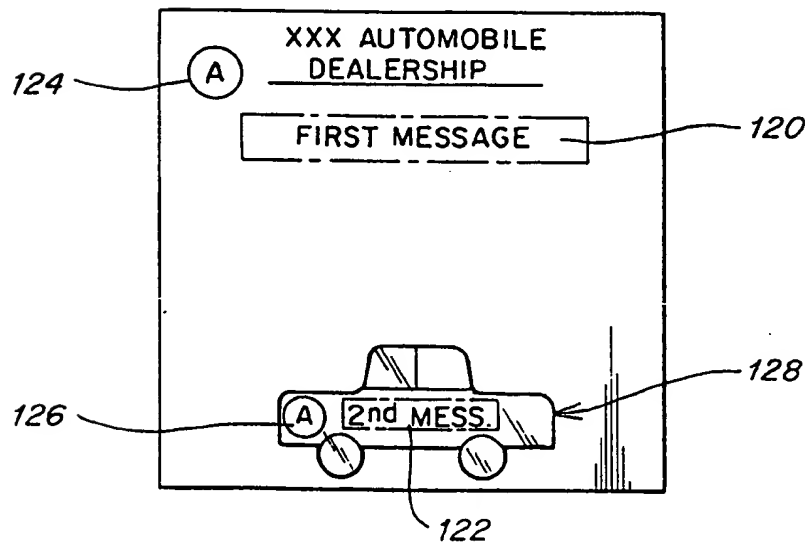


Fig. 15A

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*Fig. 16**Fig. 17*

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US98/09769

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) :B42D 15/00

US CL :283/61, 62, 100, 117

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : Please See Extra Sheet.

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5,513,117 A (SMALL) 30 April 1996, see figure 10.	37-47, 54-56
Y		1-36, 48-53
Y	US 4,951,969 A (EPSTEIN ET AL) 28 August 1990, see entire document.	1-56
Y	US 4,890,402 A (CARROLL) 02 January 1990, see entire document.	5, 6, 21, 22
Y	US 4,588,980 A (STURDIVAN) 17 December 1985, see entire document.	3, 8, 12-19
A	US 5,359,793 A (COPPERSTONE) 01 November 1994, see entire document.	4 and 20

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents.	*T* Inter document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
A document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	*X* document of particular relevance: the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
E earlier document published on or after the international filing date	*Y* document of particular relevance: the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
L document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	*A* document member of the same patent family
O document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
P document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search

03 AUGUST 1998

Date of mailing of the international search report

19 AUG 1998

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Telephone No. (703) 308-1148

Sheila Venev
Paralegal Specialist
Group 3200 3710

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US98/09769

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 5,421,620 A (SAUERWINE) 06 June 1995, see entire document.	3, 8, 12-19
Y	Gold Circle Productions, Inc. of Miami, Florida - Greeting Card having a compact disc.	4 and 20

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US98/09769

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched

Classification System: U.S.

283/61, 62, 100-109, 117, 81, 74, 75, 56; 462/6, 25, 26, 64, 65, 900; 40/299, 124.01, 124.06, 124.09, 124.11, 124.14, 124.16, 774-778; 428/40.1, 41.8, 42.1, 42.2, 42.3, 43